entrepreneurs by making use of research and development infrastructure available with such institutes and thereby helping them in improving the quality of their other agencies like the National Institute of Fashion Technology, National Institute of Design and Textiles Committee for introducing better quality design input in this sector. Efforts have also been made and continue to renovate and modernize the sales outlets managed by the KVIC itself as well as those run by its aided institutions.

All these measures have the objective of making these industries competitive in today's market and help their sustainability and growth.

Establishment of ARIs

75. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated any plan to establish agriculture-based industries, provide technical training for it as well as to provide financial assistance for the establishment of Industries to farmers in order to bring improvement in the economic conditions of the farmers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, whether Government are considering to formulate any plan in this regard in the near future?

THE MINISTER OF AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES (SHRI MAHAVIR PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) To promote agro and rural industries in the country, the Government has been implementing the Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP) through the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). Under this programme, an entrepreneur can establish a village industry, including village industry based on agricultural produce, by availing of margin money assistance from the KVIC and loans from any public sector scheduled commercial bank, for projects with a maximum cost of Rs. 25 lakh. Projects costing upto Rs. 10 lakh are entitled to margin money support of up to 25 per cent of the project cost. For projects costing above Rs. 10 lakh and upto Rs. 25 lakh, the rate of margin money support is 25 per cent of Rs. 10 lakh plus 10 per cent of the balance cost of the project for the general category of entrepreneurs. In the case of entrepreneurs from the weaker sections, *viz.,* the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes,

Other Backward Classes, Women, Physically Handicapped, Ex-servicemen, Minority community, etc., the margin money given is at the rate of 30 per cent of the project cost up to Rs. 10 lakh while for projects costing above Rs. 10 lakh and up to Rs. 25 lakh, the rate of margin money assistance is 30 per cent of Rs. 10 lakh plus 10 per cent of the balance cost of the project.

39809 projects have been set up in the agro and food processing sector upto 31.03.2004 and Rs. 155.32 crore of margin money assistance has been provided to these projects under the REGP 5.41 lakh additional employment opportunities have been generated in these projects upto 31.03.2004.

Under the REGP, the KVIC provides training on entrepreneurship development through a number of accredited training centres. Further, KVIC itself runs 15 Multidisciplinary Training Centres while 6 training centres are operated by the State Khadi and Village Industry Boards and 20 by other implementing agencies. These training centres provide skill development training through various technical courses (both theoretical and practical) for the benefit of artisans/entrepreneurs engaged in khadi and village industries activities.

(c) Does not arise.

Technical viability of nuclear fusion

76. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether India is thinking of joining the highly ambitious project promoted by a select band of advanced countries to build a plant to demonstrate technical viability of nuclear fusion as a source of energy;

(b) if so, the details of the project and the countries that are involved in the project; and

(c) the financial commitment required to become a member of the programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) India has expressed its interest to join the development of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).